

School Committee Meeting Minutes
Lura A. White
February 10, 2004

Present: Donald Parker, Chairperson
Paul Wilson
Gary Bourassa
Hugh Muffoletto (arrived at 7:20)

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent
Patricia Stern, Business Manager
Suzanne Mahoney, Elementary Principal
Thomas Walsh, SPED director
Sylvia Jordan, Middle School Principal

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Public Participation:

As there was no public participation the meeting moved to discuss old business.

Gary Bourassa motioned to approve the minutes of January 27, 2004. Paul Wilson seconded. Motion was approved.

Patricia Stern, Business Manager, reviewed the FY05 Custodial and Maintenance budget. This budget represents only a portion of the final budget as final contract costs are still being reviewed. Final costs should be available at the next meeting. In the meantime, Mrs. Stern presented a budget with an overall increase of \$3129 from FY04's budget. With regard to staffing, a request was made to hire one part-time, 20 hour/week custodian to work the calendar year at the middle school. A summer hire was also requested as we are having difficulty obtaining MCI crews who would normally do the summer tasks. With the opening of the auditorium yet to come there is no way to know how its maintenance will impact the current staff.

With regard for maintenance of equipment, a request was made for two snow blowers to be utilized at LAW and Devens. The ones that we currently have are residential machines that are continually in need of repair. These new machines will be a more productive use of time than shovels would be.

Extraordinary maintenance for the middle school did not include any items as hopefully there will not be need for any with such a new school. At LAW repair and/or replacement of sinks, faucets, blinds, windows and ceiling tiles were included in the budget. Floors in the 1936 building as well as the gyms need to be refinished. The water fountains in the gym area are so old that parts are hard to find to keep it functioning. A

new fountain placed outside of the gym has been requested. Siding for the elevator shaft was another item requested as paint is currently chipping. The exterior small gym door needs to be replaced as well as the roof on the red storage building. Playground sand was requested for the elementary schools.

Center School will require retiling of the restrooms. The costs associated with this repair will be funded from the Early Learning revolving account that holds the tuition money for the program.

Devens will require the continuation of carpet removal and floor tiling that has taken place over the past few years as a direct result of an air quality report done a few years ago. It was questioned whether we should continue with this project as we are leasing this building. Mrs. Stern stated that as we are using the building we should take the recommended actions mentioned in the report.

Paul Wilson motioned to approve this portion of the budget, contingent on final budget figures that will be presented at the next meeting. Hugh Muffoletto seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Mrs. Stern reviewed payables warrants 434 and 434. She also reviewed payroll warrants 329 and 829. All were approved.

The Finance Committee has requested that the School Committee meet with them on February 23. This meeting will take place at the Town Offices at 7:45 p.m. The meeting will focus on discussions regarding the Capital Plan, Center School issues and the general budget.

Dr. Scott reviewed the FY05 staffing and salary proposals. With regard to staffing, Dr. Scott proposed the following reductions in staff:

- Eliminate one Grade 2 teacher. Class sizes will still be on average of 20 students per class.
- Replace the retiring computer teacher with a lab assistant.
- Eliminate Spanish instruction (.6 FTE) at the elementary level. Spanish will be offered as an elective at the end of the day.
- Eliminate art generalist position by reorganizing specialist staff.
- Total cost reduction: \$135,000.00

The following additions were proposed:

- SPED teacher will be added at the middles school. This position was approved at an earlier School Committee meeting.
- One part-time, 20 hour custodian and one summer hire custodian. These positions were approved earlier in this meeting.
- Increase current library assistant position from 5.5 hours per day to 6.5 hours per day.

- Devens nurse is currently funded through a Department of Public Health grant, which has been cut from Governor Romney's budget. The nurse position should be funded by the district.
- Total increase: \$74,500.00

Dr. Scott also proposed that some of the staff would be reorganized as follows:

- Reading Recovery teachers, currently funded through Title 1 grant, NCLB and local district monies, would include grades 1 through 3, not just grade 1.
- Reading Specialist for grades 3 and 4 would have more responsibility for MCAS monitoring at grades 1 through 4.
- Elementary Behavior Specialist would be replaced with a math support teacher.
- Overall savings would be \$60,500.00.

These changes would primarily change how the specials are scheduled. There was some concern over the elimination of the Elementary Behavior Specialist. Dr. Scott stated that by having more support in academics there should be a decrease in behavior issues. Mrs. Mahoney also stated that many of the elementary teachers are in the process of completing a school behavior course taught through Fitchburg State College.

Mr. Parker stated that he believes there should be an Assistant Principal, especially at the middle school level, who would have full administrative privileges. Mr. Parker would like to see this position added in the near future. A motion was made by Hugh Muffoletto for the approval of the staffing changes, with the recommendation that a discussion should be held in two weeks regarding the eliminated positions or other concerns the members may have with this proposal. Gary Bourassa seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Patricia Stern reviewed Fy05 Salaries. Overall, salaries increased 3% over FY04 figures. These increases are due primarily to lane changes for the teaching staff, the inclusion of a portion of a kindergarten teacher's salary that may not be covered by a grant next year and the hiring of the custodians previously discussed at this meeting. The middle school staff will remain relatively stable, with some teachers possibly realigning their positions.

Dr. Scott moved on to discuss Administrative salaries. The committee reviewed Administrative salaries from neighboring communities. Dr. Scott would like to raise the salaries of the principals, business manager and SPED director to be more in line with the other communities. These raises would be 6.67 for the SPED director and 10% for the other three administrators, bringing them to the low end of the salary range. Dr. Scott would receive a raise according to the terms of his contract. There was concern among the members that the comparisons were not made between communities of similar structure. The committee members felt that this was a lot of information to take in without further review. The committee will review the information for discussion at a later date.

The Annual Town Report was written by Dr. Scott and emailed to the committee members for their review. Any changes that the members feel need to be made will be

done so and returned, via email, to Dr. Scott. The report is due in the Town Offices by February 23.

Committee members discussed the possibility of obtaining a police radio for the Devens school for emergency situations. If a 911 call is made from a Devens phone the call does not register as originating at Devens. Only if a call is made from a fax machine will emergency personnel know the correct origin of the call.

Another issue mentioned was the posting of Level Three Sex Offender pictures.

The committee moved forward to discuss the Governor's House FY05 budget proposal. Dr. Scott announced that the state is level funding Shirley at \$3.95 million.

The committee reviewed the monthly enrollment update, which reflected a slight increase in students.

The final revision of the Homeless Students policy was included for submission in the members' policy handbook.

Per pupil expenditure for Devens students was reviewed. Per FY02 figures, the day cost for a regular education student was \$6,512.00 as compared to a special education cost of \$11,547.00. The FY03 blended cost of Devens students, regardless of education plan, was \$8,796.00.

An accreditation representative will be available to meet with the school committee on April 27 to discuss the accreditation process.

Dr. Scott complimented the PTA on all of their hard work this year and acknowledged the winners of a current program, Reflections, sponsored by the PTA.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Karen Gutheil